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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - U.S. Diplomacy - Iran
PARIS - Monday, June 19, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

U.S. Diplomacy - Iran

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

Last evening's "passable" performance by France's World Cup team is widely covered in editorials and on today's front pages, with the exception of La Croix which leads with the International Court of Justice, "progressing but still too slowly" in the eyes of victims, and Le Monde which headlines "The Europeans Want to Resume Financial Aid to the Palestinians." The decision in Brussels to give 100 million euros in aid without going through Hamas... was announced on Friday. "The EU, afraid that the territories may be economically asphyxiated wanted to find a solution to help the population while by-passing Hamas." La Croix's question of the day, "Are the Palestinian Territories in the Grips of a Civil War?" is answered by an elected member of the Palestinian Authority, Hind Khoury: "This is an exaggeration. There are military skirmishes, but political leaders are talking to one another..."

America's foreign policy under the leadership of Secretary Rice is the subject of a laudatory op-ed in Le Figaro entitled "Condi Rice's Method to Widen Spectrum of U.S. Diplomacy" and is largely devoted to her new Iran policy. Saturday's Le Figaro reports that "Beijing is pushing Iran to Compromise." (See Part C) Le Figaro devotes a major report to "Tension Between Ethiopia and Somalia's Islamists" drafted from dispatches.

Liberation carries the French translation of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's op-ed entitled "A UN World Cup?" Annan acknowledges that the soccer World Cup is truly "a global game, which has made the UN jealous... It is a rare phenomenon with the same universal reach as the UN..."

Le Figaro reports on FM Douste-Blazy's trip to Doha to promote French business in Qatar. "Qatar is planning to invest 130 million dollars to strengthen its infrastructures, and the FM said that 'French companies wanted to be in on the development... with constructive partnerships, in particular in the area of biotechnologies,' (a strongpoint of the city of which he is also Mayor, Toulouse) and a sector which is controlled by the Americans. This pole of excellence is of great interest to the French, who are well positioned in weapons sales and coastal security, but are overtaken in other economic sectors by the Americans."

Le Figaro carries an op-ed on the proposed merger between the Paris stock exchange Euronext and the NYSE. The five signatories explain why a marriage with the Americans is best "despite a paradox: the agreement with Wall Street would better preserve the European model..."

Economic news is dominated by EADS, Airbus's parent company. La Croix's editorial recalls EADS's recent internal leadership battle, the Clearstream scandal and the industrial difficulties it is experiencing with the A380. Guillaume Goubert urges the government to "Save EADS" from itself, "because EADS is one of the greatest examples of European cooperation." Monday's La Tribune and Saturday's Le Parisien carry interviews with EADS executive co-president Nokl Forgeard, who maintained a defensive attitude, expressing shock at the accusations of insider trading. In La Tribune Forgeard said: "At the time of EADS' creation, a crisis like the one we face today would have been enough to destroy the enterprise. Today, our group has the maturity to face it." In Les Echos, editorialist Gilles Senghs writes: "The Airbus' problem lies with EADS' management: the 'double helm' system EADS has implemented (with two co-presidents, two general directors, and two assistant general directors) is obviously faulty and has led to the crisis."

Le Monde reports on its front page that "the war between Airbus and Boeing is also a war of images... This has been a longstanding practice. But today the attacks against Airbus in the U.S. are targeting its A380 as an inadequate consumer product."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

"Condi Rice's Method to Widen Spectrum of U.S. Diplomacy"

Philippe Gelie in right-of-center Le Figaro (06/19): "Led by Condoleezza Rice, a musical virtuoso since early childhood, America's diplomacy has returned to complex chess games where pawns make unforeseen moves... The conditional offer for a direct dialogue with Iran stands as proof, as do the rehabilitation of Libya and the possibility of a peace treaty with North Korea. She has moved smoothly into the State Department, a bastion of pragmatism. And in order to lead diplomats reluctant to follow President Bush's revolutionary ambitions, she has surrounded herself with a pugnacious team, which includes Robert Zoellick, and Nick Burns, while sending hawks like Bolton away to the UN. She has widened the spectrum of the tools at her disposal, rethought most strategies and opened up the game in a spectacular manner... Rice, contrary to her predecessor who did not have the President's ear..., uses all of her influence to avoid dissension. The May 31st decision (concerning Iran) carries her trademark... Although the new Iran strategy may appear as an about face, it has in fact been thoroughly thought out... Rice sets the course and adapts the means to her objectives. Her offer for a dialogue (with Iran) aims to bring together the international coalition which is suspicious of U.S. intentions and which tends to decipher its diplomacy in light of the Iraqi crisis. It also offers the advantage of testing Iran's desire for peace... The road traveled since March 2005... is astounding. It is proof of the considerable influence she exerts over the President... Some may be waiting in the wings to see whether her policy succeeds or fails, or she may truly have convinced them. Time will tell... But it is a fact that nothing is taboo for America's diplomatic leader."

"Beijing Urges Tehran to Compromise"

Jean-Jacques Mevel in right-of-center Le Figaro (06/17): "For the first time, Iran has looked favorably on the initiative of the Big Five plus Germany that would lead them to suspend their nuclear enrichment program... 'We are considering the offer as a step forward,' said President Ahmadinejad in Beijing... Another high placed Iranian official expressed hope for the opening of negotiations... Ahmadinejad was in Shanghai hoping to receive support from China in blocking any eventual western sanctions... China, which is divided between its responsibility as a great power and its immediate oil interests, is not ready to abandon Teheran... But President Hu took care not to cede to the Iranian charm offensive." STAPLETON